

*Comfort for mourning Christians :*

OR,

CONSOLATION DRAWN FROM VARIOUS SOURCES  
TO PREVENT UNREASONABLE SORROW FOR  
THE LOSS OF DEPARTED FRIENDS.

---

A

S E R M O N,

P R E A C H E D

At FLEET, in *Lincolnshire*, October 27th,

1789;

AT THE FUNERAL OF

Mr. MATTHEW HURSTHOUSE,

Who departed this Life, October 25th, 1789.

AGED SEVENTY YEARS.

---

L O N D O N :

PRINTED BY R. HAWES, IN QUEEN-STREET, MOORFIELDS :

AND SOLD BY THE AUTHOR, NO. 4, NORTON-FALGATE ;

AND BY MR. DE CAMP, OF FLEET.

(Price Six-pence.)

THE  
OFFICE OF THE  
COMMISSIONER OF THE  
LAND OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

RECEIVED  
JAN 11 1903

THE  
LAND OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

RECEIVED  
JAN 11 1903

THE  
LAND OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

RECEIVED  
JAN 11 1903

THE  
LAND OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

223  
11

*Comfort for mourning Christians.*

---

I THESSALONIANS, iv. 13—18.

BUT I WOULD NOT HAVE YOU TO BE IGNORANT, BRETHREN, CONCERNING THEM WHO ARE ASLEEP, THAT YE SORROW NOT, EVEN AS OTHERS THAT HAVE NO HOPE. FOR IF WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS DIED AND ROSE AGAIN, EVEN SO THEM ALSO WHO SLEEP IN JESUS WILL GOD BRING WITH HIM. FOR THIS WE SAY UNTO YOU BY THE WORD OF THE LORD, THAT WE WHO ARE ALIVE AND REMAIN UNTO THE COMING OF THE LORD, SHALL NOT PREVENT THEM WHO ARE ASLEEP. FOR THE LORD HIMSELF SHALL DESCEND FROM HEAVEN WITH A SHOUT, WITH THE VOICE OF THE ARCHANGEL, AND WITH THE TRUMP OF GOD: AND THE DEAD IN CHRIST SHALL RISE FIRST. THEN WE WHO ARE ALIVE, AND REMAIN, SHALL BE CAUGHT UP TOGETHER WITH THEM INTO THE CLOUDS, TO MEET THE LORD IN THE AIR, AND SO SHALL WE EVER (OR ALWAYS) BE WITH THE LORD. WHEREFORE, COMFORT ONE ANOTHER WITH THESE WORDS.

**B**EING desired by the Relatives of our deceased Friend, to give a discourse on this solemn occasion, for their consolation,

I could not think of a passage of Scripture better calculated for that purpose than this which I have read.

The Theſſalonians had been newly converted from Heatheniſm; in that their former ſtate they had been accuſtomed (as all Pagans are) to the moſt grievous lamentations at the death of their relatives and friends, ſhewing the moſt extravagant ſigns of bitter grief; by howlings, tearing their hair, cutting their fleſh, and divers other extravagancies, and abominable ceremonies.

In that dark ſtate of ignorance in which they had lived, they had but very faint gleams of the immortality of the ſoul and happineſs beyond death, and not the ſmalleſt idea of the reſurrection of the body; therefore their ſorrow for the death of their friends was exceeding bitter, and might be ſaid, comparatively, to be without hope.

Paganism was, and is, a dark, ignorant, and very uncomfortable ſituation; the book of divine Revelation alone has brought life and immortality to light; and the Goſpel Diſpenſation has afforded the cleareſt diſcoveries of the great realities of the unſeen ſtate.

Chriſtians

Christians can never be sufficiently thankful for the knowledge of these important things which they receive by the Gospel.

The holy Apostle wished to instruct the Brethren; he expressed a desire that they should not remain ignorant of the state of such who sleep in Jesus, that he might prevent that fruitless, hopeless sorrow, in which the Gentiles used to be drowned upon these occasions.

To prevent their mourning and sorrowing as without hope, the Apostle lays before them the most solid grounds of consolation, that ever were or can be presented to the minds of those who mourn the loss of Christian Friends departed. These I shall endeavour to set before you on this occasion, for your comfort and satisfaction.

The first great source of our consolation is, that we believe that *JESUS died*. This is not only a ground of comfort in itself, but the foundation of all the rest.

That Jesus died for us, is such a consolation as must give the believing soul solid satisfaction. Had not Jesus died for us, our hopes of immortality had been but poorly founded. His death hath given us hope:

This event certainly took place, and was intended for the most glorious purposes.

JESUS certainly died for us; there cannot be the least dispute of the fact itself; and the declaration of it was part of the gospel preached by St. Paul. As he says, “ I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand : By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.” 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2, 3, 4.

The death of Jesus is not only a fact which we as Christians firmly believe, but is a fact of very great importance, upon which our hopes and expectations of eternal felicity, and consequently our comforts very much depend.

JESUS not only died for us, but died to answer many important purposes : But I shall only notice such at present as have an immediate connexion with my subject.

Our blessed Saviour died for us, that he might deliver us from our sins, and thus  
disarm

disarm Death of its fatal sting, and give us the victory over the fear and dread of that enemy. How apposite is the Poet's language!

- " The knell, the shroud, the mattock, and the grave;  
 " The deep damp vault, the darkness, and the worm;  
 " These are the bugbears of a winter's eve,  
 " The terrors of the living, not the dead,  
 " Imagination's fool, and Error's wretch,  
 " Man makes a death that nature never made;  
 " Then on the point of his own fancy falls,  
 " And feels a thousand deaths in fearing one.  
 " Though nature's terrors, thus, may be repress:  
 " Still frowns grim death: guilt points the tyrant's spear;  
 " And whence all human guilt? from death forgot.  
 " Ah me! too long I set at nought the swarm  
 " Of friendly warnings, which around me flew,  
 " And smild unsmitten: small my cause to smile!  
 " Death's admonitions, like shafts upwards shot,  
 " More dreadful by delay, the longer ere  
 " They strike our hearts, the deeper is their wound.  
 " What hand the barb'd, envenom'd thought can draw,  
 " What healing hand can pour the balm of peace,  
 " And turn my fight undaunted on the tomb?  
 " With joy—with grief, that healing hand I see;  
 " Ah! too conspicuous! it is fix'd on high,  
 " On high? What means my frenzy? I blasphemic,  
 " Alas! how low! how far beneath the skies,  
 " The skies it form'd; and now it bleeds for me—  
 " But bleeds the balm I want—yet still it bleeds.  
 " Draw the dire steel! Ah no! the dreadful blessing  
 " What heart, or can sustain, or dares forego?  
 " There hangs all human hope; that nail supports  
 " The

“ The falling Universe—that gone, we drop !  
 “ Horror receives us, and the dismal wish  
 “ Creation had been smother’d in its birth.  
 “ Darkness his curtain, and his bed the dust,  
 “ When sun and stars are dust beneath his throne,  
 “ In heaven itself can such indulgence dwell ?  
 “ Oh what a groan was there ! a groan not his.  
 “ He seiz’d our dreadful right : our load sustain’d ;  
 “ And heav’d the mountain from a guilty world,  
 “ A thousand worlds, so bought, were bought too dear.  
 “ Sensations new in angels bosoms rise ;  
 “ Suspend their song, and make a pause in bliss.

All the power of Reason and Philosophy can never disarm the mortal tyrant of his sting—but the death of Jesus, to a true believer, is the cause of his joy and triumph: It is a view of this that can arm the soul with holy fortitude, and teach it to smile undaunted on the gloomy scene.

“ Forasmuch then as the children are  
 “ partakers of flesh and blood, he also him-  
 “ self likewise took part of the same, that  
 “ through death he might destroy him that  
 “ had the power of death, that is the devil ;  
 “ and deliver them who through fear of  
 “ death were all their life-time subject to  
 “ bondage.” Heb. ii. 14, 15.

O it was kind in our dear Redeemer to die for us, that he might sympathize with

us in death; deliver us from its sting, and save us from the fears thereof. He “ died “ for us, that whether we wake or sleep we “ should live together with him.” 1 Thess. v. 10. Therefore in his hands we may trust our departing Spirits, being fully persuaded that he is able to keep and preserve whatever we commit to his care. “ For none of us “ liveth to himself, and no man dieth to “ himself. For whether we live, we live “ unto the Lord; and whether we die, we “ die unto the Lord; whether we live there- “ fore, or die, we are the Lord’s. For “ to this end Christ both died, and rose; “ and revived, that he might be Lord both “ of the dead and living.” Rom. xiv. 7, 8, 9.

Wherefore it is matter of great comfort to us that believe, to know that Jesus hath died for us, to save us from our sins, and to disarm death of its terrors, besides accomplishing many other very important purposes, which I cannot pretend to mention at present.

Another source of our highest consolation mentioned in this text is, that we believe not only that Jesus *died*, but that he *rose again*.

The

The Resurrection of Jesus is one of the most important truths of the Gospel, and upon which all the rest in a sort depend. For if the doctrine of the Resurrection of Christ be overthrown, the whole Gospel must fall with it. See 1 Cor. xv. where this matter is fairly argued, and this conclusion drawn.

Wherever the Apostles went, they preached the Resurrection of Jesus as the foundation of faith, hope, and joy; and that Christ was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures, is declared by St. Paul as a part, yea and a principal part of the Gospel, or the good news which he proclaimed to men.

The true believer in Christ hath no reason to fear death or the grave, since Jesus died and conquered death, was laid in the grave, and sanctified the tomb, and rose again triumphantly. He now liveth, that once was dead, and behold, he is alive for evermore, Amen; and hath the keys of hell and death. Rev. i. 18.

The true Christian may therefore exult, and say with the Apostle, "It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth?" "It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is  
 "risen

“risen again, who is even at the right hand  
 “of God, who also maketh intercession for  
 “us. Who shall separate us from the love  
 “of Christ? &c. For I am persuaded that nei-  
 “ther death nor life, &c. shall be able to se-  
 “parate us from the love of God which is in  
 “Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom, viii. 33—39.

The death and resurrection of Jesus are  
 those glorious sources of comfort and con-  
 solation (to such who truly believe in his  
 name) that cannot fail, and that will afford  
 peace and joy in a dying hour.

Having just hinted at these great founda-  
 tions of our comfort, I shall pass to mention  
 those other very consolatory thoughts which  
 are hinted in this sublime passage, which  
 tend naturally to dry up the tears, and calm  
 the sorrows of those believers in Jesus who  
 mourn the loss of pious Christian friends and  
 relatives. They are fallen asleep in Jesus,  
 and are departed to their Saviour's arms.

How comforting the expressions! How  
 safe and happy their state! We need not  
 lament and grieve bitterly on their behalf;  
 they have slept in Jesus, and are now with  
 him. If this were the only consolation af-  
 forded us on their behalf, would it not be  
 sufficient to quiet our minds, and prevent our

sorrowing as those that have no hope ? Oh !  
 what a blessed thing it is to be in Christ by  
 a vital union, and to fall asleep in his kind  
 arms !

“ The souls of the righteous are in the  
 “ hand of God, and there shall no torment  
 “ touch them. In the sight of the unwise  
 “ they seemed to die, and their departure  
 “ is taken for misery, and their going from  
 “ us to be utter destruction ; but they are  
 “ in peace. For though they be punished  
 “ in the sight of men, yet is their hope full  
 “ of immortality, and having been a little  
 “ chastized, they shall be greatly rewarded ;  
 “ for God proved them, and found them  
 “ worthy for himself. As gold in the fur-  
 “ nace hath he tried them, and hath receiv-  
 “ ed them as a burnt-offering. And in the  
 “ time of their visitation, they shall shine,  
 “ and run to and fro, like sparks among the  
 “ stubble. They shall judge the nations,  
 “ and have dominion over the people, and  
 “ their Lord shall reign for ever. They  
 “ that put their trust in him shall understand  
 “ the truth ; and such as be faithful in love,  
 “ shall abide with him ; for grace and mercy  
 “ is to his saints, and he hath care for his  
 “ elect.” Wisdom of Solomon. iii. 1—9.

They

They are gone from this world of sin, sorrow, pain and death, and are with their Lord, in the regions of peace and felicity. It is more than intimated in my text, that their souls are with him in a state of conscious happy existence; because it is said, that God will *bring with him* those who sleep in Jesus, and this is mentioned before the account of their being raised; therefore I think those who sleep in Jesus must be *with their Lord*, during the intermediate state between their death and resurrection.

The scriptures in several places seem to hold out the idea, that the souls of the righteous being delivered from this miserable life, enter into peace, joy, felicity, and the immediate presence of their Lord. As Isaiah, lvii. 1, 2.

“ The righteous perisheth, and no man  
 “ layeth it to heart; and merciful men are  
 “ taken away, none considering that the  
 “ righteous are taken away from the evil to  
 “ come. He shall enter into peace: they  
 “ shall rest in their beds, each one walking  
 “ in his uprightness.”

And the Apostle Paul says, 2 Cor. v. 6, 8.  
 “ Therefore we are always confident, know-  
 “ ing that whilst we are at home in the

“ body we are absent from the Lord. We  
 “ are confident, and willing rather to be  
 “ absent from the body, and to be present  
 “ with the Lord.”

Now if the soul does not exist in a state of conscious happiness after its departure from the body, it is impossible that these words can be strictly and literally true; because then no believer could be with the Lord without being present with his body also; whereas the Apostle and his brethren were so confident that they should be present with the Lord, even at the very time when they were absent from the body, that they were quite willing to leave this mortal life, and quit their clay tabernacles, in full expectation of finding a much happier state of existence in the presence of their Saviour. And St. Paul testified that his death would be gain to him, which I think could hardly be, if he was to be deprived of a state of conscious happy existence: and he says to the Philippians, chap. i. 23, 24, “ For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better: Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh, is more needful for you.”

So that it seems evident that the righteous,  
 when

when they depart hence, go to dwell with their Lord.

This is a source of comfort to those whose pious friends are departed; we believe them to be with Christ: and were this all, it would be great consolation indeed. But this, far from being the whole, is but the beginning, for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, (as we certainly do) we believe with just the same degree of assurance, that God will bring the spirits or souls of all that sleep in Jesus, or die in the Lord, with him, when he shall come,

- What great things are these! The Lord our Saviour shall come, and with him all his saints. Not more certainly did Jesus suffer upon the cross, rise again from the dead, and ascend up into heaven, than he shall come again in glory, and all his saints with him.

This great event, the second coming of Christ, is spoken of by many of the Prophets, and by all the Apostles: many scores of passages point to this glorious advent of our Saviour; too many for me to mention at this time. This is the great subject of the New Testament Prophecies, and what the first Christians looked for with the utmost earnestness of expectation, I shall  
give

give a little specimen of the evidence of this joyful expectation and comfortable hope of true believers. For I scarcely know of a more comforting truth in all the New Testament than the coming of JESUS. He will surely come, he will not tarry beyond the appointed time. The true Christian Church in all ages hath greatly desired this event, *“Come Lord Jesus, come quickly; Amen: even so come, Lord Jesus!”* hath been the language of all those who loved him, in all the ages since he ascended to heaven.

It is impossible to read the New Testament with the least attention, and not perceive that the second coming of Christ is the great object of expectation, and matter of the greatest joy to all that love Jesus.

Our Saviour himself spake largely and frequently of his coming again in glory, and holds it forth as matter of the greatest comfort, encouragement, and joy to his disciples.---- *“Let not your hearts be troubled; Ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that*

“ that where I am, there ye may be also.”

St. John, xiv. 1, 2, 3.

And he counsels them, when they behold the signs of his coming (which in themselves are very terrible) to look up and lift up their heads, because their redemption draweth nigh. St. Luke xxi. 28.

The apostle Paul calls the coming of Christ, our Salvation: --- “ For now is our “ Salvation nearer than when we believed.” Rom. xiii. 11. “ And unto them that look for “ him he shall appear the second time without “ sin unto salvation.” Heb. ix. 28. And he himself looked forward to that event with great desire: being persuaded that Jesus whom he had believed and trusted, was able to keep that which he had committed unto him against that day. 2 Tim. i. 12. and he could say, “ Henceforth there is laid up for “ me a crown of righteousness, which the “ Lord the righteous Judge shall give me “ at that day: and not to me only, but un- “ to all them also that love his appearing.” chap. iv. 8.

That same grace which bringeth salvation, and teacheth us to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, teaches us  
also.

also to look for that blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ : Tit. ii. 11, 12, 13.

And these very Theſſalonians, to whom this epiſtle was written, when they turned from idols to ſerve the living and true God, began “ to wait for his Son from heaven, “ whom he had raiſed from the dead, even “ Jeſus, who delivered us from the wrath to “ come.” 1 Theſſ. i. 9, 10.

The Apoſtles had their converſation in heaven from whence they looked for the Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Phil. iii. 20.

It is evident from all their preaching and writing, that they as much believed that Chriſt would come again from heaven, as they believed that he died, roſe again, and aſcended into the heavens. I could eaſily multiply proofs of the certainty of his coming : But let it ſuffice to obſerve, that it was frequently and ſolemnly declared by our Lord, in the days of his fleſh, in the moſt expreſs terms. See St. Matt. xvi. 27. xxiv. 27. 30. xxv. 31. xxvi. 64. St Mark, viii. 38. xiii. 26. xiv. 62. St. Luke xvii. 24, 26, 30. xxi. 27.

And it was atteſted by the angels, at the time of our Lord's aſcenſion, in theſe words, “ Ye men of Galilee, why ſtand ye gazing  
“ up

“ up into heaven ? this same Jesus, who is  
 “ taken up from you into heaven, shall so  
 “ come in like manner as ye have seen him  
 “ go into heaven.” Acts i. 11. And Peter  
 delivered the same doctrine in his discourses  
 to the Jews, saying, “ And he (the Lord)  
 “ shall send Jesus Christ, who before was  
 “ preached unto you : Whom the heaven  
 “ must receive (or rather *retain*) until the  
 “ times of restitution,” &c. Acts iii. 20, 21.

And the same event is frequently alluded to, mentioned, and sometimes largely treated of in the epistles. It is expressly mentioned in all the epistles to the Churches, except the Galatians and Ephesians ; and in all the particular epistles, except St. Paul’s to Philemon, and the second and third of St. John. But above all, this event is the burden of the song in the two epistles to the Thessalonians, being expressly mentioned in every chapter ; but especially insisted on in the words of my text.

It is therefore a plainly revealed Truth, that our Lord Jesus will come—a Truth of great importance, and full of comfort and consolation to all his friends and followers.

Our dearest friend is gone up into heaven, but he shall return from thence to bless our

D

longing

longing eyes with his glorious presence.  
O what a comforting reflexion is this !

But we are not only greatly cheered with the idea that our Lord shall come, but are also allowed to entertain this comfortable reflection, that those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. Happy are they who being united to Jesus by faith and love, walking in his ways, doing and suffering his will on earth, fall asleep in his arms, and rest in the bosom of their Saviour ; These he will bring with him when he comes in glory ; among whom we hope and trust our dear departed friend and father will be found. We have reason to think that he loved the appearing of Christ, and that he now rests from all his labours, pains and sorrows, and in that glorious morning shall come with Jesus, among the ten thousands of his saints. O may we all be in that blessed company !

O what a comfort this is to mourners ! to have the hope that their departed friends are with Jesus, and shall come with him ! This thought greatly mitigates their sorrow, and almost turns it into joy and rejoicing. Those, who while in this world were dead to sin, dead to the law by the body of Christ ; crucified to the world, and the world to them,  
who

who were risen with Christ, and whose life was hid with Christ in God, who set their affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and who were likened to their Saviour here, and departed in the true faith; these have slept in Jesus; these are the dead who die in the Lord; these are blessed, from henceforth, and for ever; and when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory. Col. iii. 1, 2, 3, 4. See also Rom. vii. 4. vi. 2, 6, 8. Galat. ii. 19, 20. vi. 14. St. John, xiv. 19. Rev. xiv. 13.

But we have not only the happiness of knowing that those who sleep in Jesus are in peace at present, and shall certainly come with Christ, but if there is any meaning in the plainest words of scripture, they shall rise from their graves, and even their vile bodies shall be changed, and shall be fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ. The bodies of the saints that are sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption; now they are sown in dishonour, but at the coming of Christ they shall be raised in glory; though sown in weakness, they shall be raised in power: they are sown natural bodies, but they shall be raised spiritual bodies; and

as they have borne the image of the earthy, even the first Adam, so they shall also bear the image of the heavenly, Jesus Christ, the second Adam, who is the Lord from heaven. Phil. iii. 21. 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43, 44, 49.

The resurrection of the dead, though delivered in the most positive terms, and with the utmost clearness of expression, is doubted of and denied by many, who would yet be called Christians; and I hope some of them have the root of the matter in them. But I would beg leave to put the question to them that St. Paul put to his noble hearers, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?” Acts xxvi. 8.

Since the Being of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness has promised to raise the dead, why should any doubt it? I trust we heartily believe this important article of the Christian faith, upon which the whole gospel system so evidently and entirely depends. It is wholly an article of divine revelation, declared indeed in the Old Testament, in several express passages, but more fully revealed and confirmed in the New. We receive it upon the divine authority, and the resurrection of the saints is confirmed, proved,  
and

and exemplified in the resurrection of our Lord.

The Apostle assures us in the words of my text, by the word of the Lord, by the authority of the glorious Redeemer, that those saints who shall be found alive, and shall remain on the earth until the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them who are asleep; that is, the living saints shall have no pre-eminence above those in their graves, they shall not first be changed and caught up before their brethren who dwell in the dust awake; but on the contrary, they that sleep in the dust of the earth shall first arise, then those that are alive shall be changed, and all together shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; as the words of my text testify.

To accomplish these great wonders, the Lord himself shall descend from heaven. He shall come in person, who once dwelt on the earth in the humble form of a servant. This passage is so plain in favour of the personal appearance of Christ, that I wonder how the force of it can possibly be evaded.

He that ascended into heaven will descend from heaven. But how will he come? he will descend with a shout. When he ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, it might

might be said, " God is gone up with a shout, " JEHOVAH, with the sound of a trumpet." Psalm lxxviii. 18. xlvii. 5. But Oh, when Jesus shall come again, what a shout will be heard ! all heaven and earth shall ring ; the shout of a king will be heard in the heavenly camp. Oh what a shout will ascend up from all the saints on earth, who shall rejoice to see their Lord, and will cry, " Come Lord " Jesus, come quickly." This shout will be accompanied with the voice of the archangel. When Christ was to be conceived, the arch angel Gabriel came down to announce the same to the holy virgin ; and when he was born, the voice of the same heavenly messenger was heard, proclaiming the very joyful tidings, saying, " Fear not ; " for behold I bring you good tidings of " great joy, &c.

When he arose, the angel came down, and rolled away the stone from the sepulchre, and sat upon it, caused the guard to tremble and flee away, comforted the women who came to seek their Lord, and proclaimed the Saviour risen from the dead. When he ascended, angels declared that he should come again in like manner. And certainly when he shall come again attended with all his  
 holy

holy angels and all the saints, the voice of the great arch-angel shall be heard, the glorious herald shall proclaim the King of glory nigh. Oh what a voice shall that be! who can conceive? The trump of God shall blow, and such effects shall follow the sound as shall astonish the inhabitants of the world. What those consequences shall be, we will consider presently.

But let us now for a moment dwell on this very comfortable thought, that our Lord and dear Redeemer will certainly come in the clouds of heaven—will come in glory, attended with holy angels, in all the pomp of heaven, with a shout, the voice of the arch-angel, and with the solemn trump of God. Oh! what a joyful consideration is this, that our glorious Lord and best Friend will come again! He that was once despised and rejected of men on earth, will come to be honoured and glorified where he suffered shame, will come to be admired in all them that believe in that day.

When the Lord himself shall thus descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the arch-angel, and with the trump of God, the dead in Christ shall rise first. Those that are here called *the dead in Christ*,  
are

are such as are *in* Christ by a vital union, who *abide* in Christ by faith and love, and who *die in the Lord*, and sleep in Jesus; these shall rise first when the Lord shall come. The meaning of these words is not merely that the dead saints shall rise before the rest of the dead; though this is certain, and we learn from Rev. xx. that there shall be full a thousand years between the resurrection of the saints, and the rest of the dead; and that they shall be blessed and holy that shall have a part in the first resurrection, for on such the second death shall have no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. But I take the plain meaning of the words to be, that the dead in Christ shall rise even before the living saints shall be changed, and thus those that are alive and remain on the earth shall not prevent, or be beforehand with them that sleep. They who have passed through death shall not thereby lose the advantage of Christ's coming, nor be superseded by those who shall be found alive; but as those who sleep in Jesus have passed through an inconvenience, which those that remain shall never feel, even the death of their bodies, so they shall be first glorified;

never-

nevertheless the change shall so immediately after take place upon all the saints that are found alive, that the difference of time shall scarcely be perceived.

O what a subject of comfort is this! All the dead in Christ shall then arise, no more to feel sin, sorrow, sickness, pain, or death for ever. All the raised bodies shall be eternally freed from all kinds of infirmities whatever. Dim-sighted Isaac shall be blind no more: Lame Jacob shall halt no more. All shall flourish in eternal life, bloom with never-fading health, beauty and vigour. Among the raised saints, none shall be subject to any kind of infirmity, either natural or moral: all shall be clothed in the Saviour's image, free from every defect. They shall appear beautiful beyond description. Three things constitute a perfect beauty;—symmetry, or a just proportion of parts, genuine colour, and vivacity. All these shall appear in the resurrection bodies. They shall be totally delivered from the power of the elements; shall be spiritual, immortal, and glorious. St. Paul says, “When Christ, who  
“is our life shall appear, then shall ye also  
“appear with him in glory.” Col. iii. 4. And St. John says, “Beloved, now are  
E “we

“ we the sons of God, and it doth not yet  
 “ appear what we shall be : but we know  
 “ that when he shall appear, we shall be  
 “ like him ; for we shall see him as he is.”  
 1 John iii. 2.

O what a glorious sight it will be, to see all those who have slept, or shall sleep in Jesus, burst from their confinement, and spring into life and glory unknown ! among whom we hope our dear friend, whose remains are to be interred this evening, will be found in that joyful day. This is matter of the highest consolation to you that are mourners on this occasion. You cannot sorrow for him as those that have no hope.

But there is another source of comfort in the words of my text, which is, that all true saints who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall be changed, and caught up together with those who shall be raised, in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. It is not indeed mentioned expressly in this text, that those that remain shall be changed, in so many plain words, but it is strongly implied, even so strongly as to amount to a full proof ; for it would be impossible for those on earth to be caught up together with the risen saints, unless they them-

themselves should be changed, and made immortal, spiritual, and incorruptible.

St. Paul informs the Corinthians (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.) of this glorious, sudden, and surprizing change which shall take place upon those who remain until the coming of Christ, says he, “Behold I shew you a  
 “mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we  
 “shall all be changed, in a moment, in the  
 “twinkling of an eye, at the last trump;  
 “for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead  
 “shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall  
 “be changed.” This is the only passage in the Bible that expressly mentions this astonishing event, which remained a mystery, or thing hidden, ’till St. Paul shewed it to the Churches, being himself taught it by the Lord.

This important prediction, at the same time that it is matter of great joy in itself to the saints who shall be found alive at our Lord’s coming, furnishes one of the strongest arguments for the real and proper resurrection of the bodies of the saints from their graves. For as the bodies of the saints who remain, shall not die at all, but be changed instantly, and made immortal, they would have an infinite advantage over those who sleep in Jesus,

unless the latter should be really raised from their graves, in which case all would have an equal benefit. And as the Scriptures in many places speak of the resurrection of the bodies from their graves in the most express manner, we have no more reason to doubt of its truth, than we have to dispute the change that shall pass upon those who shall not sleep at all. For whether things be promised once, or many times by the Lord, they shall be all equally fulfilled; though when any thing appears difficult to our reason, (as the resurrection of the body does to many) God frequently repeats the promises in the same or similar words, that he might confirm and strengthen our faith.

Thus we are assured from the divine testimony, that both the dead saints shall be raised, and the living saints shall be changed at our Saviour's coming. These are very comforting truths; but these are not all the subjects of consolation that are found in my text. No: We are assured that the whole company of saints, both those that are raised and those that are changed, shall be caught up together in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. O what a joyful thought is this! that we who believe in and love Jesus, shall be  
all

all together in one body, and shall rise to meet the object of our love. No more shall our bodies be subject to the power of attraction---no more shall we be incumbered with clogs of clay, cleaving to the earth and dust. Our bodies shall fully obey the wishes of our minds, and swift as on the wings of light, shall rise to meet our Saviour in the mid air; and beholding him shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is, and our joy shall be full.

That which compleats the whole, and is the last source of comfort in my text, is, that we shall be ever or (as the word *pantote* signifies) always with the Lord. This word is of a much stronger and more determinate signification than the word *aion*, which is frequently rendered, for ever, but which is often used for a period, and sometimes for a very short duration. But the endless happiness of the saints does not depend so much upon the signification of the words used to express it, as upon the nature of things, their union with Christ, their conformity to him, their being joint heirs with him, and his promises, that where he is there shall his servants be, to behold his glory; and that because he lives they shall live also.

Upon

Upon the whole, nothing is more plain than that the saints shall never be in danger of losing the happiness prepared for them. They shall always be with their Lord, shall see him as he is, shall be like him, being free from sin and all imperfection. Nothing shall ever give them a moment's pain or sorrow, but every thing shall be calculated to give them the highest delight : and most glorious felicity\*.

I scarce need add any thing more but the Apostle's exhortation in my text, " Wherefore, comfort one another with these words."

All these words are matter of very great consolation indeed. That Jesus died, that he rose again, that he ascended into heaven, which is implied by the expression, *the Lord himself shall descend from heaven* ; that those who sleep in Jesus depart unto him, and dwell with him in the bosom of happiness, which is implied by the expression, *even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him* ; That Jesus Christ our Lord shall come  
in

---

\* See this subject illustrated and treated of more fully, in a discourse entitled *Future Happiness*, printed in the *Philadelphian Magazine* for September and October 1788.

in glory, in all the pomp and grandeur of God, with a shout, with the voice of the arch-angel, and with the trump of God; That the saints departed shall come with him, that their bodies shall be raised from their graves in his likeness, and fashioned like to his glorious body, that all the living saints shall be changed; which is implied in their being caught up together with the raised bodies to meet the Lord in the air:—That they shall be altogether so caught up in the clouds, and shall have the happiness of meeting their Lord, of seeing him face to face, and of being always with him.

These are all fruitful sources of comfort, and might furnish matter for many discourses. But I must hasten to a close.

We have great reason to rejoice, that God would not have us ignorant of the happy state of those who die in the Lord, or sleep in Jesus: he would not have us to sorrow for them as those that have no hope, and therefore hath discovered to us their future glory and immortality, and those other great things that we have been treating of. You that are mourners on this occasion, have great reason to be comforted with the hopes that your deceased father and friend hath quietly departed  
in

in the Lord, hath slept in Jesus, and shall come with him, when he shall appear in glory, shall have a part in the first resurrection, and be always with his Redeemer.

May we all be so happy as to be in Christ, and abide in him, and live in him, by him, and to him continually, that when we depart this life, we may sleep in him, and come with him when he shall descend from heaven, and being raised from the dust, in his image and likeness, may rise to meet him in the air, and be always with him, in the presence of God, where there is fulness of joy, and dwell at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore.

*THE END.*